

Shifted by AmniIsRoving

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Alternative Universe - Female Reincarnated into Male Character, Anxiety, Billy and Max are REALLY Family, Billy and Nancy are Friends, Bisexual Male Character, Bisexual Steve Harrington, Canon-Typical Violence, Child Abuse, Cussing, Domestic Violence, F/M, Gender Dysphoria, Homophobia, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Implied/Referenced Rape/Non-con, M/M, Mentions of Cancer, Minor Character Death, Neil Hargrove Dies, Neil Hargrove Being an Asshole, Non-Graphic Smut, Other, POV Billy Hargrove, Panic Attack, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD, Protective Billy Hargrove, Slow Burn Technically?, Trans Character, Transphobia, domestic abuse

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Characters: Billy Hargrove, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Wheeler, Joyce Byers, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Nancy Wheeler, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington, Susan Hargrove, The Party (Stranger Things)

Relationships: Billy Hargrove & Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington, Steve Harrington/OFC

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Summary:

Billy Hargrove had some idea what was going on and what to do. They even had some of the necessary tools to survive it. Billy just had to keep out of Neil Hargrove's way, insure Max survived all this Upside Down and growing up business, and make it to eighteen (and legal again). Of course it helped and hindered that Billy remembered things from a previous life because nothing quite made any sense when reincarnation was involved... Of course, nothing quite made up

for the fact she now had a penis.

Warnings: I'm not trans, so a lot of what Billy feels might come off as awkward or incorrect, so I apologize since research is never as good as experience. If you can write something more accurate please do. Also, for anyone who gets awkward with the idea (like Billy does) of an older mental person with a physically younger individual please know that's a factor and to take caution. They don't hook up until, like later in life, but y'know, fair warning.

Shifted

Why did I get reborn as a 'him'?

That was the first thought that popped into her head as she stared into the bruised eyes of an eight years old boy's face and fingered the blond curls she found pretty but odd compared to some twenty-six years of thin, flat brown hair. Blue eyes stared back where amber colored ones once sat. She knew the shape of the jaw wrong, the length of her nose different, and the color of her skin paler—redder—than the orangey-yellow undertone she had become so used to. Even tanned from playing outdoors had done absolutely nothing to change that. Her body—was it really *her* body?—was gangly, not pudgy, and she was athletic in a way she had not been since elementary school, then again she was only eight years old in this body.

Reincarnation was fucked up.

Plus, when you were born again you were supposed to be reborn into the future right?

What was she doing in the body of a boy born in 1967? (Her previous parents were snotty teenagers, the *fuck*?)

She dragged a hand through those curls, ruining the ringlets as she hastily refocused on her breathing, the anxiety she had been diagnosed with in a previous life showing signs of flaring as her hands started to shake, her breath grew short, and she began to zone out.

Giving into a moment of panic, in this household, was going to get her a bruise that was visible rather than hidden under her shirt.

Her mother's own face spoke of that.

All in all, being William "Billy" Hargrove sucked.

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Things became a little clearer after her mother died. Billy, and the name fit barely better than William, but she could lie to herself that

Billy was a nickname for something more feminine, because it was a nickname, quickly started to notice things. Things that were oddly familiar for all that she tried to ignore them.

Like the fact her father's name was Neil.

That he was dating a woman named Susan.

That they lived in California, southern California where her father sneered at the Mexicans and Blacks, always fingering an old Marine's tattoo on his arm with a dark look in his eyes. That she heard the nearly feral growl that left his mouth when anyone Asian passed by.

(Neil was a harsh man, and when he drank his hatred came out even worse. Billy had a scar on her lower back from his belt for one of those nights the bottle put him to raging instead of sleeping. She *hated* Neil Hargrove.)

She stopped thinking she was making odd correlations when she met Susan's daughter though.

Eight years old with orangey-red hair, the girl glared up similar blue eyes from behind her mother's skirts as Susan gently introduced, "This is Maxine."

"It's Max," Maxine "Mad Max" Mayfield retorted with all the sharpness an elementary school aged child could gather.

"Hi Max," Billy said through numb lips, her worry over her father's developing relationship and what it might mean for unsuspecting Susan and her child lost behind sheer panic. "I'm Billy."

Fuck.

What the hell was she doing reborn into *Stranger Things*?

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Billy was untypical, she knew it. She knew she could look uncomfortable and shy, pulling away from strangers and watching adults with fear and calculation in the moments she let the mask drop or was caught off-guard. She had to bite her tongue too often,

practice using masculine pronouns in the mirror until it felt natural, and generally keep her head down around her father. The addition of Max and Susan to their lives did not change that, only added to her burdens. Billy no longer had to protect just herself from scrutiny, she had to protect Max.

Thoughtless, willful Max who was so selfish she sometimes hated her with a vengeance.

Thoughtless, *willful* Max who tried to run away and find her father because she hated them all.

Thoughtless, willful Max who was the only one in this damn family that Billy gave a shit about.

Billy wrapped her hand—too large and broad, callused from a sport she played because her father said boys played sports and did well in school, her father had lots of opinions on what a proper male was, unsurprisingly—around Max's upper arm and gripped it firmly, implicatively keeping a hold of her while she threw a tantrum after being caught and was dragged out of the Greyhound terminal, heels digging and kicking all the way down the street.

“Grow up, Maxine,” she hissed at her younger sibling as Max screamed back into Billy's face. Max just kept on going though, screaming that she hated their whole family. That she hated Neil, and her stupid mother, and sure as hell Billy. Hated the dinners and lunches Billy packed her when Susan was too cowed by a drunk Neil to do anything but hide in their bathroom pretending to be taking a bath or busy at work to look after them. Hated the handholding Neil forced on them both, making them joined at the hip with threats of what would happen otherwise. Hated the slowly inclosing cage around her as Neil's rules tried to beat down her spirit. That she hated the loss of freedom she had being the latch-key daughter of a single mom barely making ends meet.

Resentment. *Resentment*. Resentment.

Everything Max felt was pretty much completely valid for what the situation was, but Billy really could do nothing to change it. Right now, Billy was only a sophomore in high school, one that was already

praying to graduate just to get out of that damn house. Praying so hard every single fucking day because anyone with sanity and nearly thirty years of previous experience to waking up six and with her father beating their mother's face black and blue knew that the abuse would continue until they could run so far away they could never get dragged back.

Billy, who prayed and prayed, and had to hold on and teach Max how to keep her head down long enough to survive as well. Billy did her best to shield her, feed her, and just help her despite only recently reaching the physical age to do so properly. Billy had finally gotten her driver's license this year and Neil had let her get a job to start earning money for a car. He had complimented her on her work ethic while also delicately threatening her about what he would do if her grade point average dropped or if she slacked on her job of looking after Max. Billy had managed to make enough money to really start looking at cars, and she could definitely live a much happier life if she was not dragging her sister home right now. She could be using her free afternoon to relax since Neil was gone for the weekend for a vacation with his guy friends. Trust Max to see it as an opportunity to fuck them both over instead of bullying her mom into spoiling her.

"I hate you!" Max screamed, spittle flying, her own hair tossed with the force of her words. Billy sneered down at her, noting absently that it was true sisters fought terribly even if one of them had no knowledge the other was their sister and the fact they were not blood.

"I heard you the first time," Billy said, "I heard you the fiftieth time. Now if you'd remember we're late for dinner and whose ass is going to get beaten for your bullshit, I'd appreciate it." Max kicked her in the shin and Billy reflexively bit back the urge to shake the little bitch. Billy was not her father, she did not harm children.

"I hope he kills you!" Max said as Billy dragged her to the bus stop with one hand while the other dug in her jean's front pocket for fare for them both. Billy bit back the flinch but plowed on.

"Oh, I'm sure the cops will love to hear you say that when he does," Billy grumbled, "Then you and Susan can be left with him without an

outlet. Let's see how easy it is for you to ride your skateboard when he cracks your ribs and collarbone because you spoke out of turn again. Jesus, Max, I'm just trying to look out for both of us. Will it kill you to wait a few more years before you leave and never look back?" Max sniffled and Billy eased her grip on the eleven years old girl's shoulder to instead slide it down to her wrist, holding it gently but without give, offering her hand to grip as way of support. Max tugged on it weakly before grabbing her hand back and clenching down on it, tears of rage turning into ones of fear instead.

"I don't want to go back Billy," Max whimpered and Billy closed her eyes for a moment, letting the feel of the late Californian sun burn across the skin of her neck, the curls she had grown to love piled high on her head with a clip that protected them from flying free in the autumnal evening wind, and feeling every bit of the exhaustion beating down on her soul until it screamed loud and long. The hand digging for quarters abandoned the pocket and Billy used it to wrap around Max's shoulders and pull her closer, firmer, into her side, letting her cry and shake. Wishing so hard that Billy had instead gotten on that Greyhound with her and they successfully ran away from everything even if she had barely two dollars in her pocket and only the clothes on their back.

"Yeah kid," Billy whispered, "I know."

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Billy covered the limp with a trained swagger, emoted rage and cockiness to hide nervousness and calculation. She was smarter than any of these kids would guess, but she was probably the mental age of their parents so it was easy to be. She had two lifetimes of education, street smarts, and experience over their scrawny decade or so. At sixteen—but maybe thirty-six or forty-two—she had a damn good idea on just what she could hide and the best way to do it. The world wanted to see a charming hunk with good grades, a place on the basketball team, and smart mouth that skirted the line of almost offensive, then that was what they got. The world had no need to know the artist, the feminist, the liberal mind fighting and screaming in rebellion. The abused girl/young lady/woman's heart hiding in a masculine body. The soul aged too much for this life, and angry—oh so *angry*—that they had to sit back and take it.

Billy, the name girls spoke with reverence and boys with envy, was the “King” of her high school. No matter if she was known as picky with girls—secretly giving them advice or shielding them from the toxic masculinity that embodied others in her school and year—or if there were rumors her taste ran to older (true fact, it did). She kept appearances, made sure to be just the image of the man her father tried to beat into her, and did her best to protect Max from Neil. Susan, to her complete and utter disgust, did nothing to shield either child.

“Discipline is the prerogative of the family head, the man of the house.” Susan had stated the first time Neil smacked Max for speaking out of place, a soft hit compared to those he inflicted on Billy, but a hit never the less. Billy had glanced at her in shock, in absolute disbelief that she had sat there and watched it happen, did nothing to prevent, did nothing to revenge it. Neil had no right to lay hands on Max, the shitty old man. `

‘If you were not ready to kill for your children,’ Billy thought occasionally and full of spite as she patched up her face and stood between her father and the rare times Max was the target for his rage, ‘then you should never have reproduced you fucking old bitch.’

Max was not her child, but there was no way in *hell* she would ever leave that girl without protection while she still had breath in her body. Billy spent half of her free time trying to figure out a legal way to take Max with her when she left that damn house. Susan was going to stand back and get them both killed with her stupidity and dependency on Neil.

Fuck the Hargrove-Mayfield household, just... fuck it.

Today, Billy got through first and second period, flirted with one of the girls who had one of his toadies sighing after her and thus marking her off limits until the dick took a step back and calmed the fuck down, and dipped out of the second half of lunch to smoke a cigarette. She had never smoked in her previous life, never developing the taste for it, but between that and a renewed acquaintance with apple whiskey, she took her bad coping mechanisms where she could get them. Her father might not quite approve of it, but it was surprisingly masculine in his eyes so she got a pass in the form of a busted lip but not much more.

Of course her day went to shit that afternoon when she was pulled out of school by her father and dragged out to search for Max who had successfully managed to find a bus headed for L.A., the supposed hometown of her piece of shit, biological father who walked out on her needy mother when she was two.

The bruises on Billy's ribs got a matching pair of black eyes and she was not surprised in the least when at the end of the school year Billy and Max were informed of their move to Hawkins, Indiana because of a new job opportunity for Neil.

Good plan, Neil, moving them across country would make it pretty damn hard for Max to runaway to her father, kudos to you.

Billy sighed.

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It was forested, trees and shrubs and plants everywhere the eye could see. San Diego had been more urbanized, the growth of towering skyscrapers a common part of their skyline from their apartment on the edge between middle and lower class. Billy thought it might be okay, get to know winter and snow for once, even if she had a suspicion she was no way ready for mounds of snow and below freezing temperatures. Her Cadillac might, what with the new tires she scraped for that summer, but forty-something years of warm weather with mild winters would mean a shock to the system come October.

Max, of course, hated everything with a viciousness.

Angry and upset at her failure, angry and upset over Billy beating, angry and upset over their move.

Max was the living embodiment of unaddressed rage and frustration. Her lip was going to be gnawed raw at some point in the immediate future and Billy had forced her hands down more than once to prevent her from flipping off Neil. Neither of them could afford Billy spitting up blood if their shithole old man managed to actually break something and Billy was getting real sick of bandaging her ribs so they would not move and hurt. It was going to be hell finding

someone who would sell her pain meds without a prescription, she would probably have to settle for weed or aspirin and she was *not* looking forward to it.

Scrubbing a hand over her jaw, and flinching at the feel of bristles, she carefully lathered the offending beard with shaving cream, working the shadowy hairs over with a razor until she was clean shaven. The hairs would grow back soon, she knew it well, but there was no way on this cursed planet that she would acquiesced to looking more male than her cover demanded her to be. Tight jeans, deep V-necks to show off cleavage, and heeled boots might look masculine but she lied to herself each morning when she shrugged on her blouse. She was dressing as a liberated woman, a woman not required to hide her body and could wear pants instead of a skirt. The boots were for kicking ass and she had a nice chest. Why hide it?

Some mornings, well, Billy almost believed it. She was getting pretty good at figuring out how to tuck herself down there so it was less obvious. Tight jeans that framed the groin were...awkwardly revealing and it was bad enough when she had to pee or shower.

Disassociating was turning out to be a thing, what with her gender dysphoria and PTSD. Billy was just lucky that no slip ups about her true gender had gotten out. Neil hated the idea that she might even be gay, her lack of dating or interest had played herself there, but no proof of any queerness kept her breathing. If Neil found out she was transgender there was no way she was ever going to make it out alive of this house. Neil would kill her, plain and simple.

She would not do that to Max. She would not do that to herself.

'One more year,' she promised the seventeen years old staring back at her in the mirror as she fluffed her curls, and transformed it into the mullet she knew made her look like a wannabee rock star and all around punk. *'You can do this.'*

She shouldered her backpack and went to make hers and Max's lunches for the day.

Max flipped her off before running into school and Billy tried not to snort. The jab was practically an affectionate gesture between them. Max used it on her friends back in California and on Billy, their parents got sneers or ignored, the barest amount of respect she could give either before ducking away to do homework or play outside. Sometimes she managed to drag Billy along and others she would sneak in after dark to give her a hug after a pummeling from her harsh father. Max was real careful to avoid Neil now, even with her lack of repentance for running away. Getting Billy half-beaten to death had taught her to be a touch more cautious. Her light colored eyes would turn dark and liquid when she thought about that man and the consequences of her actions on the only person in the house who gave a damn about her.

Billy appreciated it even as she hated it.

The high school appeared in front of her windshield and she slid into a parking spot close to a side door and parked. Booted feet slipped out first before she unfolded her whole body, shirt riding up for a moment to flash tanned skin. She gazed over the surprised crowd of stunned teenagers and gave the closest ones an amused smirk.

Two girls immediately went bright red and another fanned herself dramatically.

Gross.

Billy really could live without the constant bombardment of sexual interest from minors, she really could. She threw one backpack strap over her shoulder, shutting the driver's side door with a swing of her hip and locked it. She strode past the milling groups slowly breaking out in whispering gossip and headed in to the school aimed for the office. She had been the one to stop by and sign herself up for school after all, Neil and Susan too busy with Max's precious admittance. She knew where it was and had no interest in lingering.

Time to get a start on this shitty school year.

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Billy did not look for Steve Harrington, Nancy Wheeler, or Jonathan

Byers, she had other things to worry about. She had to get herself caught up in classes, make sure Max was doing alright, and make friends with people without actually devoting any of her real self to them.

The last part was kind of a dick move, but she had no intention of being friends with children half her mental age. It was difficult enough not to punt some of the little shits in the face for their words.

Toxic masculinity, racism, sexism... All wrapped up in the godawful bow of teenage selfishness.

God did she hate this fucking decade. She could not wait for things to get more progressive, she would be wearing a black shirt with a neon rainbow on it the second she could. Fuck, she might even move to San Francisco to be in the gay capital of the USA, attend a parade wearing the Transgender Flag as a cape, and even make out with a grown man who accepted her like she had been dying to for the last three or so years. She would be out of that household and out to the world. No more stepping back, biting her tongue, and protecting herself from people who were supposed to love and cherish her. She would take care of herself and give Max a safe harbor to return to when she was also free of their toxic parents.

She fucking hated being herself someday.

Always waiting. Dying a little inside. Seeing things and not being to make a stand against them. *Puberty* being the goddamn awful cherry on top.

Billy pulled a pair of blue colored sunglasses out of her bag and dropped onto a bleacher outside away from the milling crowds desperate to get a taste of her. She dug out the English book, flipped to the poetry section, and ate her PBJ onehanded as she reread Emily Dickenson.

She, of course, noticed the people staring at her from several feet away, giggling behind their hands.

Teenage girls.

Could they...not?

God, when could today be over?

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Billy tried not to wince when she saw the black boy staring so intently at Max, his gaze avidly following her and the slightly pleased tip to Max's head as she used her hair to form a barrier between them.

Billy was all for love, any kind as long as it was safe, sane, and consensual. Billy was so far from straight and normal she had had no rocks to throw after all.

Susan had no problem with colored people or mixed racial marriages.

Neil sure as hell did.

Billy pulled her car to a stop, and turned the music down enough to be able to clearly yell over it.

"Max!" she shouted and Max's head whipped around, the curls striking the boy's face. He seemed not to care however, his whole expression sappy and puppyish.

Gag her, teenagers liking teenagers was just... ick. Sometimes cute, but mostly gross. She had hated the soppieness when she was a teenager in her first life and it was just as gross on her second go around.

"C'mon! We gotta go kid!" She called as Max made her goodbyes and then raced over, cheeks flushed from pleasure and activity. Billy glanced over her sister's shoulder to give the boys a short, suspicious glare, and peeled away when Max was in and buckled up.

"Have a good day?" She asked as Max leaned over to fiddle with the radio and tapes until she slid in The Ramones. Her little punk sister sat back, and both nodded along as the first song began to screech through the speakers. The only good thing about this decade was the ability to see all of the punk bands in person at their peak, otherwise Billy would have gone into a self-induced coma until the mid-to-late

nineties at the least.

“It was alright,” Max said, shrugging indifferently, “It’s not California and some of the guys are creepy.”

“Well,” Billy frowned at the last part, “If any of those assholes bother you let me know.”

“I can handle it Billy,” Max rolled her eyes, sinking back into her seat, arms crossing defensively over her chest, even if the hint of a pleased smile twitched on her lips. “You did teach me how to throw a punch and stuff.” Billy huffed but nodded in acceptance.

Billy, once she knew for certain she was having a little sister for good, had been more than willing to sit said bratty sister down and explain to her that boys were often raised to do stupid things and that if they tried to anything she did not like Billy was of the opinion they should be taught better. If that lesson involved Max kicking them in the dick or punching them in the gut, so be it. Billy had memories of the rape statistics and hurt friends she had known in her previous life.

1 in 4 of women were a victim of sexual assault.

61% of those who spoke up about their rape had it done to them by someone they knew.

Yeah, fuck that. Billy would rather bail Max out of jail for aggravated assault than drive her to a clinic. God only knows what Neil would do to both of them if she ever turned up underage, unwed and pregnant, voluntarily participating or not. Billy would support her one-thousand percent if she ever decided to go it alone, but no one was going to touch Max without her permission if she had anything to say about it.

And Billy did have things to say about it. A sure as hell lot of things to say about it.

Seriously, but back to the matter at hand.

“That black kid,” Billy said as they turned down a street and she could feel Max’s gaze burning into her neck, “You don’t let Neil find

out about him.”

“I’m not stupid Billy,” she bit out. “There’s nothing going on between us anyway.”

“And I don’t care if there will or will not be,” Billy retorted, glancing at her from the corner of her eyes, “But you know how he is. If Neil thinks for a moment you might be interested or doing shit you’re not supposed to, you’ll get more than just us in trouble. I’m not saying don’t be friends with him, but don’t let him call the house or have either parent find out you’re close. Friends with his group, but not because of him specifically.”

Max chewed her lip, and Billy watched the argument in her eyes—resentment, free spirit, and learned common sense warring for a moment—before she nodded begrudgingly.

“I won’t get anyone in trouble,” she muttered. Billy snorted, and a ruefully knowing grin tugged at one corner of her mouth.

“Don’t try to promise things you can’t hold to,” Billy muttered.

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Tommy H. was a dick and if Carol giggled like that again Billy was pretty certain some of her remaining brain cells would out right revolt before committing suicide. The two were extremely pissed with Harrington dropping them for his new girlfriend, hurt and annoyed that they were dropped after years of friendship, but Billy had no idea why they thought pitting her against him was doing anything for the situation.

Teenagers, she fucking hated their bullshit sometimes.

“So this is King Steve,” she sighed as Tommy introduced them at Tina’s house part, Halloween two days away and more than half the people here drunker than was probably healthy. Tommy had been talking about how Steve had been the life of the party, a real party boy before his girlfriend made him into a weakling or some shit. Tommy had a lot of shit to say about Steve, some of it good but a lot with a tinge of resentment. Tommy had gotten in trouble a few times

doing shit for Steve after all. Carol even pulled into it once. Nothing had gotten on any rap sheets because the Harringtons' had money but it had still happened. From what Billy heard half of those problems were all Tommy's fault, he took a suggestion from Steve and *run the fuck past acceptable with it*. Breaking Jonathan Byer's camera had been an asshole move though even if she vaguely remembered him replacing it via Nancy at the end of season 1.

"He's the Keg King," Tommy said cheerfully, and she sipped her glass of apple whiskey slowly as she looked him over. Steve was... coltish in form, all long limbed adolescence with the puppy fat that puberty had not quite devoured showing up on his face. His hair was fluffy, making it obvious he had some serious hair routine going on, and he looked so preppy she wanted to pour a bucket of black paint over him in a fit of punk-fueled disgust.

His girlfriend eyed her curiously and Billy gave her a polite head nod and slight smile, because she had basic courtesy even if Tommy was a misogynistic little shit who ignored the reason he no longer toadied to Steve.

"Billy Hargrove," she introduced herself when it was obvious Tommy had no idea how to finish the power play. He probably expected her to break out the machoism, never mind Billy was pretty much just a take-no-shit bitch and not an arrogant chauvinist bent on ruling the school through popularity-fueled teenage recklessness. She offered a hand to shake, "Nice to meet you." Steve took it and she wondered at how soft it was. Little to no calluses, dry and thin almost.

God he was young and unbroken.

She kind of hated him a little for it, but then she remembered he had to eventually mother several reckless middle schoolers and the emotion passed.

Poor, unsuspecting fuck.

"Steve Harrington," Steve replied pumping it like they were meeting at some fancy yacht club and she took back her hand to offer it to his date politely. She blinked at it and a small look of surprise flashed through her eyes.

“Nancy Wheeler,” she took Billy’s hand and there were more calluses on this hand than Steve’s. “It’s nice to meet you Hargrove.”

“Billy’s fine,” Billy gave them both a shrug and smile, shaking Nancy’s hand once before letting go. “You guys having a good night so far?” Tommy’s attention was being pulled away by Carol gesturing at him obscenely and Billy was spared having to deal with them both for a moment longer. Hopefully she could eventually ditch them for a few hours and work on getting liquored up.

“Not yet, but we will,” Steve said confidently, draping an arm around Nancy’s shoulders, the shorter brunette rolled her eyes at her boyfriend’s words and actions. Billy gave her a supportive smile, but directed a friendly one back at Steve.

“Well, don’t do anything I wouldn’t do,” she teased and knocked back the rest of her whiskey in a smooth motion. “Cute sweater,” he nodded to Nancy who smiled reflexively at her, pleased by the comment.

“Thanks,” Nancy said, voice half-startled. Nancy looked at her a little more openly curious and Billy wondered if that had been a little too feminine a comment. Probably, oh well.

“Bye lovebirds,” Billy flashed them a half-cocky grin and then pushed Tommy along, the guy was making kissy faces at his equally drunk girlfriend from across the room, the two getting gross with the gestures and blatant innuendo. She would deposit Tommy with Carol and then she was going to have another glass of whiskey and find a corner to chill in until she had to fold Tommy and Carol into her car and drive them home in a few hours. Hopefully there would be no future fight between her and Steve like it happened on the show. She would be down for that.

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“This is bullshit,” she heard a distraught voice yelling and she glanced up to see Nancy storming away with a completely shattered Steve watching her go. Billy watched them for a moment, saw a few girls split off to check on the girl, and hoped that Nancy was getting support rather than subjected to gossip. A flash of brown hair and a

face she recognized as the older Byers boy followed next after Steve said something to him, shoulders slumped and exhausted. Seeing the way the guys were studying Steve, especially the dark glee on Tommy's face, Billy stepped in.

"Yo, Harrington," she called out, and Steve glanced at her in surprise. "I got a question for you, care to step out for a bit with me?" Any protests from the rest of the partiers was lost when she turned her blue eyes on them, her own tightly leashed beast of protectiveness and rage shining through for a moment. Nobody said anything, smart for once, looking away and acting as if they had other plans than harassing the poor guy whose relationship was obviously falling apart.

Steve hesitated but nodded, following her out into the cool night, the chill of October sinking into her bones like she had suspected it would. It was nearly freezing and she could see her breath as she breathed out slowly, hands tucking themselves into her jeans' back pockets.

"That looked like shit," she offered when she managed to find them a spot away from any crowds or drunk couples making bad decisions. Since it was by their cars she took the chance to lean against her car's hood and study her companion's face with compassion. "I figure you don't want to talk about it but... If you need to split, I can help organize her a ride or something. I'm taking Carol and Tommy home after all." Steve studied her and the mask on his face dropped away to show the devastation, exhaustion, and grief she knew was bubbling underneath.

"It's not so bad," Steve murmured, "She just got drunk and admitted she doesn't love me, that our whole relationship is bullshit. I asked Jonathan to give her a lift so she'll be fine."

"That sucks," she agreed nodding, "But I gotta say it's not fair she said that while drunk. If she had a problem I kinda think it would have been better to do it in private and sober." He snorted, nodding a bit before taking a spot next to her, leaning against the hood and gazing up through the trees and light pollution to stare at the stars.

"She hasn't been doing well since her best friend died," Steve

confessed, "And I thought I was helping... Helping by keeping her mind off things. It seemed to work with other stuff, and it works for me... but apparently not. She thinks it and me are just bullshit."

"Death changes people," Billy said, not unkindly, and bumping shoulders with the boy, "She might still have parts of the girl you fell in love with but you guys might not be right for each other right now. Maybe she just needs time to handle her grief. Maybe she needs to figure out who she is again. I dunno. Never dated anybody long term. Never had anyone lean on me in their grief either." Harrington pressed back and Billy pointedly looked away when he ran a shaky hand through his hair, a cough coming out kind of wet sounding. Teenage boys in this decade were repressed little shits, no need to make his attempt to hold back tears awkward.

"Thanks," Steve mumbled, voice filled with gratitude and something Billy refused to look too deeply into. Billy glanced back at him, a wry smile on her lips. These kids were just so young, they had a lot of growing up to do despite society telling them they were going to be full fledged adults the moment they turned eighteen.

"It's cool, man," she promised pressing back in a silent show of support and comfort, "Sometimes you need an outside view."

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It's November 2nd and Billy has a low feeling in her gut that something bad was going to happen.

Actually, that might be because she knew shit started going down after Halloween even if she has a bad memory for dates.

They lose the little demon dog thing soon right?

...They also drag Max into it right after.

Shit.

Billy probably looked more like a chain smoker than one pack a week kind of gal she usually was, and contemplated just sticking to her sister when she noticed one of the two little brats who had been eyeing Max up like she was edible frantically drag Steve Harrington

along behind him in the direction of his car.

She sighed. She had a pretty good idea what was going on. Dustin had been the one to adopt the weird flower-dog demon thing, right? Things were kind of blurry since she had never watched the show and known it mostly through her friends talking about it around her.

“Oi, Harrington, where you going?” She yelled, catching both of the boys’ attention as she ambled over, pinching the cigarette and tucking the half-smoked stick behind an ear. The leather jacket she has tossed over her preferred jeans and shirt was barely warmer than her jean one, and she has a knit cap over her curls with a matching scarf around her neck that her step-mother had got her when things took a turn for winter. Susan proved to be good for that, even if she was a shit mother. The scarf and cap were fucking warm in the near freezing weather and Billy had hid a bit of a pleased smile when she realized her stuff matched Max’s even if hers was in an ugly puke green color and Max the hated pastel pink that made both sisters want to drown Barbie.

“Just helping the squirt with a problem,” Steve replied. Billy repressed the need to snort. Problem was only a small truth, the kid has him trying to help close the gate after Godzilla had already gotten out and started exploring Tokyo after all.

“Oh, need a hand?” Billy offered and Henderson let out a noise that was half panicked and half annoyed. Billy gave the boy an amused look and Steve immediately stepped in, charm on his face and alarm in his eyes.

“Nope, we got it,” Steve promised and Billy gave them both a nod, mentally letting out a long, annoyed sigh.

Fuck, she will have to convince Max to let her come or follow them. Her baby sister was not going to be fighting demon spawn without her.

“Cool then,” she shrugged, “Let me know if I can help.”

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Karen Wheeler was gross.

That was all Billy could say. The woman was easily twice her physical age and had panted after her like Billy was a prime rib and she was a starving dog. The woman was so thirsty the ocean would only wet her mouth. Fuck, Billy was almost tempted to reevaluate her disgust with teenage girls, maybe they were a lesser evil in comparison to unhappily married folk. She had a long-time disgust for married men who decided to be chauvinistic cheating pieces of shit after all.

Anyway, no fault divorce was a thing right? She knew some states had been slow on the uptake but it had become a thing in the seventies and eighties, so Indiana should have some laws making it available. Maybe the woman just needed a hand to get the fuck out of her dead-end relationship and find some dick her own age if she was so desperate for positive attention.

Jesus, when did she start wondering if the best way to help people was telling them to fuck off and find an older dick with a law degree instead of a minor to lust after?

Because, yeah, still seventeen physically, and again, Karen Wheeler was gross for lighting up with interest when Billy politely complimented her and asked about her while looking for information on Max's whereabouts. It was just the basic, *how are you*, and *you look nice*, kind of shit, none of the salacious flirting she seemed to believe was happening. (Billy was also trying not to think about her question of her looking for Nancy. Like why would she think a teenage girl with a boyfriend was the target of interest? Like, did she think Nancy was desperate for dick or something? Some sort of projection of her own needs? Fuck, Billy really did not want to think about this right now.)

She sighed, tucking a cigarette between her lips and swearing mentally over the fact the phonebook had been in the kitchen in view of her parents' and thus forcing her to search out people who knew where the Byers lived. If she had known where the Henderson's or Sinclair's homes were she definitely would have gone to them but no, she had only known the Wheelers' address.

Fuck her luck.

She glanced over her shoulder to the back seat and mentally recounted what was in her trunk.

Emergency bag for when she split or was locked out of the house because of Shitty Neil—*check*.

Emergency bag for Max for the same reason—*check*.

First-Aid Kit—*check*.

Some non-perishables, a battery powered lamp, several blankets and some pillows, and a few things she could use to camp out—*check*.

Some stashed money in various places in the car—*check*.

A collection of items she would probably looks super suspicious for having, probably enough to get her looked at by the cops for plans to kidnap or murder someone?

Oh fucking *check*.

She licked her lips, and smirked a bit as she reached out and picked up the bottle of cheap vodka sitting innocently in her front seat, unscrewing the cap and taking a single swig before replacing the mostly full bottle back on the seat cap tightened with her teeth.

That 120 proof would make a fire nice and hot when she got right down to it.

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The Byers house had been pretty easy to find after all that and she placed a new cigarette to her lips when she reached it, flicking the previous butt into her car's trash bag. Almost immediately Steve appeared in the doorway, shutting it behind him and standing there for a moment taking her in.

"Steve," she stepped out of her car. "Am I dreaming or is that you?" She leaned her hip against the hood of her car and lit her cigarette lazily.

“Yeah it’s me, don’t cream your pants,” he shot back and she arched an amused brow at him.

“What are you doing here? You got a little sibling on the loose too?” She asked and he poorly hid a wince.

“Nope, just waiting around for Jonathan,” he lied.

“Really?” She glanced over his shoulder and made eye contact with Max who was looking at her through the window, “Cuz it looks like you’re hanging out with my sister and her geeky friends at a house with no adult supervision.” Steve blinked and turned to see several heads suddenly duck.

“Fuck,” he breathed out lowly and she snorted. He glanced back at her warily, watching how she crossed her arms and the ripple of impressive muscles. She had to be tough enough to take care of Max, as well as have the build her father believed a man should, so she lifted until she became fond of it. She was no skinny colt like him, but a muscular athlete who knew how to throw a punch. The way he eyed her made her think he was worried she was going to lay him out.

How cute.

“Take a chill pill,” she said dryly, “I’m not going to ream your ass about being friends with my sister. She’s too young for you to flirt with and I’m pretty sure you’re not going to dick around with anyone who doesn’t have a pair of real tits.” She glanced him up and down enjoying the look of disgust on his face, taking a long drag before breathing out in a long exhale, smoke curling against the porch light like smoke from a dragon. “Still, the night is not young and Max has to go home.”

“I, uh, would be all for that but there’s...”

“There’s what?” She met his eyes and stared into them seriously, “Is there something wrong? Anything I can do to help?” She could see the argument in his eyes going on for a moment before he made a decision and offered up a sheepish grin.

“Well, would you like to come inside and talk for a moment?”

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“And what are you going to use to set these tunnels on fire?” She asked dryly, crossing her right ankle over the other as she leaned against the kitchen counter eyeing the group of overexcited puppies. “Prayers and candy wrappers?”

“We have supplies!” Henderson retorted grumpily.

“Yeah? Name ‘em,” she stroked a hand through Max’s head, her sister leaning into her side and the two glaring at the group of cocky male teens. Max had looked half-relieved and half-terrified until Billy agreed to stick it out with them. Then she had plastered herself as close as possible to Billy, arms going around her waist and a glare that begged someone to start something with her.

Billy taught her that glare, it was a good one and she was so proud to see all three of her sister’s little friends shrink from it.

“I’ll take care of it,” she promised when Max had did a lightning quick glance over her, lingering over her torso, Neil’s favorite area to pound discipline into her. She chucked her sister’s chin, tipping it up so she would meet her eyes, “I can handle it, Max.”

Max had gave a single, jerky nod and then kicked Mike in the shin when he tried to protest Billy’s sudden inclusion in the team.

“If there’s two cars we can carry more supplies,” Billy pointed out, “Harrington can afford the gas, and I’ve got the matches and lighter fluid you butts probably didn’t even think to need. Plus, I’m not letting you all play pyromaniac without supervision. Not with my little sister involved shitheads.” The middle school boys glared at her but she could easily feel the relieved and thoughtful glance Steve sent her.

“I still don’t like this,” Steve confessed and a new flurry of protests were suddenly being shouted, he yelled over them, “But!” It calmed after he gave a long, mean glare, “But I’ll go along with it if you listen to what Billy and I have to say and do exactly what we tell you

to do.” A few resentful seconds later there were nods all around.

“Awesome,” she drawled, and lit her cigarette with her lighter, “Max rides with me and we’ll take another of you shits.” She glanced at Steve, and offered reluctantly, “Which two annoy you less? I’ll take the last asshole with us to save you a little bit of a headache.” Steve honest to God took a moment to look deeply grateful at her while the younger boys all bristled in offense. Henderson yelling an offended, “Hey!”

.-.

There were vines trying to strangle people and Billy was so passed done with other people’s shit that she was tempted to just light the forest on fire and claim *it was an accidental cigarette butt, officer, Billy promises, scout’s honor*. The crowbar she had long since picked up—stolen really—from a construction site on the long as drive to Indiana smashed pointedly down on a thick tendril reaching for Max. *Yeah, like she was gonna let that kind of shit happen, fucking demonic bullshit*. She swiftly doused it using the bottle of vodka she held in her other hand, smiling grimly when Max threw a piece of lit char paper on it and hurried a few steps back. The vine caught fire easily and she kicked away another piece, absently noting how the others were doing. The vodka sloshed when she chucked it viciously against a tunnel wall further down, spreading a nearby fire and lighting up the whole space. The vines withered and shivered unnaturally, and she sucked in a deep breath, depressed a little that it was not tinged with nicotine or marijuana.

She was going to get so basted after this. She could use it for her nerves and the pain she knew was coming.

Things went on for a little while longer before suddenly everything collapsed and Mike started cheering and chanting. He said a girl’s name several times and even without her previous knowledge she had a damn good idea what he felt about her and what she was capable of.

Puppy love, she smirked, reaching for her pack of semi-crushed cigarettes.

It was so cute and sweet sometimes she grew nauseous.

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Somehow the whole Halloween and Monster Killing things made her new friends. Steve started talking to her the following days, feeling out her opinion on stuff, and Nancy stopped by to say hello their first day back in school, Jonathan in tow, and kept on doing so. Steve, Nancy and Jonathan seemed to be in some awkward place with each other, both guys still in love with the same girl but more focused on helping her than competing. Billy found it weird to be some kind of Dear Abby for Steve, a fashion consultant for Nancy, or to have a casual music-based friendship with Jonathan, since she had technically only known any of them for such a short while.

The fact their little siblings were all friends kind of meant they got dragged together too when it became obvious she was *that Billy*, Max's older sibling, the one looking out for her and making sure she was happy. The earlier friendships between the kids cemented the ones amongst the older crowd. It mean the relationship Billy had with them was definitely not canon.

Probably because, unlike male-Billy, she was not off partying and going on benders, seducing girls and flirting with unhappily wed women. Because of that, Max did not resent her, or feel a need to smash and fight against Billy every step of the way. Instead they have a solid relationship since Billy was the one who gave Max rides to and from school, to and from activities, and generally was at hand to help or protect her. She got a feel for all the little shits hanging out with Max, giving both Henderson and Sinclair a warning look when it appeared they had intentions for her kid sister the first time they met outside of the school before letting them run off. Will, to her ever soft heart, was a sweetie and she tried to keep from startling him too badly when they are introduced after Halloween, the small boy obviously still spooked and a tad uneasy after his mental rape. (Damn, that kid need some kind of therapy to deal with all he went through. Billy should know, she was planning on attending a whole lot of sessions once she found the right doctor.)

As it would turn out, Jonathan bonded with her over being protective over their younger siblings because of shitty parents. Jonathan

seemed to catch a vibe from her that things were not well with their parents, considering no one was ever invited to their house and Sinclair had been forbidden from calling there for reasons neither sibling was willing to go into. He just studied her eyes, face, and posture and helped to force the kids to drop it when Henderson and Sinclair wanted to protest the restriction.

“You guys drop it,” he argued, the Hargrove-Mayfield portion fed up.

“Neil doesn’t like unknown callers,” Max shouted as part of the argument, “Just let it go jerks!” Billy had shrugged in agreement, trying not to remember the time he laid her out because a classmate had the audacity to call during dinner and interrupt them because of a school project. That had been Max’s first introduction to Neil and Billy’s dynamics. It had been less than great.

“He also doesn’t like it if we’re out too late,” Billy tacked on after the group of boys seem to droop, her lips are twisted into what she hopes is a self-depreciating smirk, “So we’re not going to be allowed for any sleepovers and shit.”

“Okay,” Nancy said and a light of understanding was starting to grow in her sharp eyes.

“Yeah,” Billy gave her a grim smile, “Okay.”

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Billy had gotten her ass handed to her after that night of fire and devilry. Max had cried all through the next morning when she saw her torso. Billy had shushed her in the car, soothing her and promising things would be fine, that she would be alright. The look on Max’s face when she glanced back at their house on Cherry Street could only be termed ugly in the vaguest meaning of the word, there was a darkness in there that squeezed at Billy’s heart although she accepted the comfort Max offered as well as she could.

“I’ll be alright,” she promised.

And... they kind of had.

The next month was hell to keep her ribs in shape and her face from

flinching when it hurt. Her friendships helped keep her distracted though. Nancy was smart and they challenged each other and Billy was glad to have an actually female friend for the first time in over ten years. She had dearly missed shooting the shit with another female. Nancy would occasionally get a look in her eyes when she said something just slightly off from what a guy would and Billy could only offer a shrug when those curious eyes studied her in fascination with questions unvoiced. Jonathan and her traded tapes and vinyl records, both of them having similar enough taste and limited enough wallets to need and enjoy that. Steve seemed to settle into the position of Den Mother over the Party and Billy was often dragged in when he desperately needed backup and a second car because the Beamer was getting too crowded.

Billy tried not to laugh too hard when Henderson complained that Steve and Billy were not Mom and Dad. Billy just found it absolutely hilarious that Billy was obviously Dad while Steve was Mom. If she was free of her father's house and knew no one in town would hate her for coming out, she might have even shared why she laughed so much each time it was even vaguely referenced.

Billy did her homework, she beat other boys at their own game in basketball, helped Steve with his grades and game play, chatted with Nancy about clothes, and shared music with Jonathan.

Things were good.

Then the stupid dance came.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading this! It's a percolated mess from my intrigue with female reborn into another world, especially if there's no gender bend. It's kind of a headcannon tangle, so I hope you enjoyed it. If you want to scream at me, you can find me on Tumblr under either my personal blog AmniIsRoving or better yet, Amni-Writes-Fanfiction where things are definitely neater and not complete chaos with a bunch of personal stuff.